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POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF STATE UNIVERSITIES

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Religion would be stronger in all our colleges if learning itself were stronger. But the old passion for excellence in things of the mind has given place to a *blasé* indifference. While athletics runs as a strong man, and social life rides, culture goes limping across the campus. The gilded youth who now flies to college comes to give off money rather than to take on learning. He says to the president as he hands him a tip, "George, do my studying for me," and as he drives in his limousine, he shows little respect for poor Socrates afoot.

Add to this general condition, so unfortunate for an earnest faith, two rather special ones of the state universities. These institutions are largely technical, with utilitarian ends. Their agricultural stations show us how to multiply the yield of our land, their engineering schools show us how to wrest wealth in all its forms from the hands of nature, their chemical laboratories advance practical science and enlarge the powers of industry. Money-makers, these schools are, and dealing with material things for material ends, it would be strange indeed if they did not sometimes neglect the nobler aspirations of the spirit of youth. It is hard to serve God and Mammon.

The other condition is this: No adequate assistance has been received from the church. Assuming that these institutions are creations of the devil, it

has done little for them but give them the same.

Such an attitude is utterly illogical. The American state universities form a part of the American public-school system. If they are secular, it is because of their place in that system; if they are unreligious, it is in precisely the same way, and to the same degree, as the lower schools. Is not Esau Jacob's brother? Yet the church loves Jacob, but Esau it has hated. Even today, the religious potentialities of these colossal institutions of higher learning are scarcely glimpsed by the church.

The volume of religion latent in 200,000 students—50 per cent of our college young people—even if they all came from infidel homes, would be tremendous. But the students of our state universities were not altogether born in sin. In eighteen state schools in 1920, statistics covering five students out of every eight show that four of the five are already in membership in Christian churches. It was proved a few years ago in Minnesota that the average son of a Protestant church home is eleven times as likely to enter the state university as the son of a non-church family. Infidelity neither founds universities nor provides them with students: it neither creates light nor seeks it.

The teaching staff of these schools have come from no evil place. They hail from the religious schools. Three

state university heads whom I happen to know personally are Congregationalists, all trained in Congregational colleges. In my own pastorates, I have been assisted by ten state-university professors as deacons, by five such professors as superintendents of Sunday school, and by four deans on my prudential committees.

Such institutions are not to be regarded as spiritual deserts. It is worth our while to sow seed in them, and to irrigate their rich soil with the water of life.

If ever there was a truth that the church overlooked but should heed, it is this: that all institutions become what those who interest themselves in them insist they shall be. If the church's neglect of any institution does not spell hell for that institution, then I do not know how to spell hell, but there is nothing wrong with the state university that our Christian churches cannot set right.

It is only fair to the university, moreover, to state that some of its alleged evil effects upon faith are due, not to the church's mere neglect, but to something worse. They are due not to irreligious teaching during college, but to unintelligent preaching before and after college.

It may be noted in passing that there are some necessary readjustments in college days, that bring their temporary religious troubles, for which neither church nor school may be held to blame. Says Thomas Carlyle: "Perfect ignorance is quiet and perfect knowledge is quiet, but the transition from the one to the other is a noisy one." True of the youth in college, and he sometimes becomes noisy about the absurdity of

faith. In normal cases, however, if you will merely press on his gums, or give him something hard to bite on, his teeth will presently come through, and the inflammation will soon go down. Sometimes, also, an inert mass of undigested culture, souring on his brain, produces gases, which cause his head to swell out of all proportion to its solid contents; such disorders are temporary and to be expected.

But what I refer to is a type of minister that renders faith almost impossible for an educated person. This man teaches so irrational a religion that when it strikes an academic atmosphere it goes to pieces. No student coming from a university to listen to such a minister can make his science harmonize with what he has to hear. Before modern teaching a medieval type of preaching is bound to fall. No man who wears a seven-and-three-quarters hat through six days of the week is going to doff it every Sunday morning for a number five.

Often the pastor who carries the state university on his books in red ink—sometimes very red indeed—is himself guilty of the damage he charges to the school. So long as we employ him, he cannot fail to alienate our increasing numbers of cultured youth.

The counterpart of this minister, as far as religious effect is concerned, is sometimes seen in the corps of instruction. He is a man of mountainous erudition and microscopic insight. The religious breath of the little man has been sucked by research. Spiritually, he resembles one of those dreary little satellites that have not bulk enough to carry an atmosphere. Because his ignorance of religious thought fails to

harmonize with his knowledge of science, he sneers at the church, and when he has done his perfect work his student has exchanged faith for a Doctor's degree.

My idea of what ought to be done to these two men is suggested by a notice I once chanced to see in Minnesota. It was signed by the village marshal, and ran like this: "All persons having dogs running at large on the streets and chasing vehicles will be declared a public nuisance and will be ordered shot by the village council." When church and university leaders shall agree together to remove both the soulless instructor and the brainless preacher, they will end a powerful conspiracy of evil that works much detriment to both culture and faith.

Education and religion both have need of being brought together. Faith without culture has no broader mission than to save men's skins in the world to come. Culture without faith is content, in the words of Bill Nye, to "stock a student full of information." Religion by itself believes things that are palpably absurd. Education by itself believes nothing that has not been demonstrated to the intellect—though a little pig, thirty minutes old, is able to get its living by blind instinct, which is almost more at the present time than a college professor can do with all his learning!

There is no right religion that is not educated, there is no right education that is not infilled with religion. Each is a divining rod, enabling one to discern beneath the surface of life. Together they make one's soul an Aeolian harp, with every wind of the spirit that blows making music in its strings. Religion impels a man to use for the people of the state the culture that the state through

its school affords him. The separation of the church and education, though formally required in state institutions, is essentially impossible. If the two cannot come together formally in the university as an institution, they must be brought together vitally in the university as a free community. In such a correlation there lies an unlimited potentiality for religious development in our state schools.

I am glad to note an increasing willingness to come together. Yuan Shih Kai as president of China once said this: "I am a Confucianist, but unless the ethics of Christianity shall dominate the scholarship of China, there is no hope for the Republic." Our state-university presidents are not less wise than this Confucianist. They are Christian men, in almost every instance they are members of the church, some of them are ordained ministers, and they covet religious influences for their students.

During the last few years they have come to feel this need as never before. In the once dearly beloved Germany, whose universities we had been embracing those many years without realizing that they were spiritual corpses, they have witnessed the effects of state education without vital power, until it is not too much to say that they are eager for church co-operation.

This is not to say that they would welcome church control of education. They do not want it ecclesiasticized. They are opposed to any blighting of academic freedom by churchly dogmatism. But when it comes to any intelligent and sympathetic attempt to permeate their schools with the spirit of the Christian religion, they crave it.

The churches also are now seeking to help. The Episcopalians have many projects before them, involving the services of a large number of additional workers. In five years, the Methodists have extended their work from ten state schools to forty. Similar progress is being made by the Presbyterians. Our own churches have moved in the same direction of late, and they are planning to go much farther. True, nowhere has there yet appeared any full realization of the opportunity. In most cases, the church as a whole does not yet invest a single dollar for each hundred that the state puts into these places, nor support one clergyman or other worker for each hundred instructors the state supports. Yet what has been done is an earnest of adequate co-operation in the days to come, with its unlimited potentiality for faith in these places of intellectual power.

Already, a good number of "university pastors" have been sent by the denominations at large to co-operate with the community ministers, and occasionally a congregation is receiving special aid in the erection of a church building of adequate size and suitable appointments for effective ministry to a great body of students. It is beginning to be realized, also, that the church "back home," to which in four cases out of five the student will never return, should encourage him to "affiliate" by definite pledge of faithful attendance, if not to enter into full membership, with the church on which he must rely for spiritual power during his four years of university life. It is too much to expect of most young people that they shall be faithful to a church to which they do not belong.

There is also a growing sense in the denominations of the boundless opportunities for preaching in these throbbing centers of university life. Who can estimate the tremendous effects of the long and prophetic service of Charles R. Brown at the doors of the University of California, of Eugene G. Updike at the University of Wisconsin, of Washington Gladden at Ohio, of Carl S. Patton at Michigan? There is not room enough at present in our church at Ann Arbor for those who are thronging there to hear Lloyd Douglas. At whatever cost to the church at large, such men should be sent to proclaim religion at every university center. Nothing can take the place of great preaching in these places—preaching that not only supplements the instructor's teaching after it has reached the intellect of the student but that enters the mind of the professor himself and infils his instruction with spiritual power.

Outside the pulpit and voluntary classes, there are three ways in which religious teaching is destined to have large place at state schools.

It is being learned by most of them, for one thing, that much of the material usually denominated religious, but which is by no means sectarian, may be taught as a part of the curriculum. The Religious Education Association has recently placed four of these schools in its exclusive class "A" for such curriculum teaching. In any commonwealth predominantly Christian, the principle thus established is bound to work out to its logical conclusion. Authorities are rapidly realizing the fact that no school is properly a university till it affords academic instruction in every subject of

broad human interest, and Professor Starbuck, writing not many years ago to a score of state-university presidents, found that most of them thought the state might properly go even so far as to train religious leaders.

Some such courses it is well enough to let the state teach, but there are many others which offer a precious privilege to the church, and some of the denominations are eagerly seizing it. The Methodists have established nine of their Wesley Foundations. The Disciples have a large number of Bible chairs. At every large state center of learning there is going to be a union school for religious instruction, with university credits for its courses.

For the most part, such work will be undergraduate. It will powerfully leaven the whole student body. It will place religion in the student mind among the reasonable things. It will send men forth from college intelligent and modern-minded in their religious ideas, as well as in sociological and economic subjects.

But we shall also raise up ministers in these places. We all admit that we have not been securing enough of the strongest type of men for the Christian pulpit for a number of years, or since about the time that we ourselves respectively were ordained! In these institutions, then, where according to the observation of John R. Mott are a disproportionate number of the strongest young people of our colleges, is the place to go fishing for preachers. At last reports the Methodist church was securing 25 per cent of its foreign mission workers from the field, so recently barren, of the state universities, and the

Presbyterians have already secured in a single year in twenty such schools one hundred twenty-four decisions for the ministry and missions.

Such is what is going to be. Under proper conditions, it is just as inevitable that a large proportion of adolescent youth shall make such choices as that under favorable conditions they will become engaged to be married.

We need therefore in these centers graduate theological schools. Our first American university was vocational for the training of ministers only, our modern state schools are vocational for the training of everyone else. Far more important than any little, narrow, insulated, sectarian, vested-interest-of-the-community institution of theology, graduating a student and a half each year, is the union divinity school of the future, situated at the side of these groups of massive state colleges from which so many of our ministers must come.

What a splendid class of religious leaders we shall thus secure! Men who with their masters have stood out in the open fields of truth, asking no favors, and who have conquered an impregnable faith. In such places the weaker will give up and quit, to go into some less adventurous profession, but those who develop and remain steadfast will prove strong men.

In a state university such as I have built up in this paper, we shall more and more get to the heart of the matter, which after all is the faculty. If a member of the faculty is essentially wrong, it is hard to get around him to the student. Let even a two-by-four instructor assume a supercilious attitude toward

Jesus Christ, and straightway he has imitators in the student body. It is the man who teaches geometry, physics, and what not that determines the faith of the student. It follows that no "Rah Rah" type of preacher, who interests boys and girls only, can capture a state university—rather the one who both sympathizes and synchronizes with the mind of the scholar. It follows also that the opportunity of the professor to come in contact with scholarly men of his own caliber in other chairs, to learn thereby how men as careful and enlightened in their thinking as he himself can believe profoundly in the things of the soul, is big with potentiality for the school's religious life.

As a result of such contact, and of such other influences as I have presented, the whole teaching of these institutions, and through the teaching their life, will become more and more religious.

But these schools will never become sectarian. In my own affiliate membership of students, there were represented at one time fourteen communions, including a Greek Orthodox churchman from Nazareth and a Roman Catholic. In these places there is destined to come

faster than anywhere else the union of denominations. For the state-university mind recognizes but one line of religious cleavage, the line between dogmatism, tradition, and a half-baked supernaturalism, on the one hand, offering escape from penalty hereafter, and on the other hand the free search for truth, the acceptance of God as everywhere, and the demand that religion be made practical through service and sacrifice now.

Our state schools have doubled their attendance in each decade of their fifty years, with their largest accession of all last autumn. At this rate, in twenty-two years more they would have a million students. Into the average American community of one thousand people, these young people are going now as leaders at the rate of thirty in a generation. In great numbers they are returning at the close of their courses to their homes in China, Japan, India, each to wield more influence from his point of vantage inside and at the top of society than is possible to an American missionary. As I think of such facts, I am struck with awe. Here at these centers, as nowhere else, we may preach the gospel to the whole creation.